FIRST-HAND or SECOND-HAND RELIGION:
WHICH SHALL IT BE?

Jer: 17:14"Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise."

INTRO. For a Fall-time stimulus I am reading the Prophets of the O.T. I find them more modern and vital than ever.

A perusal of Jeremiah suggested our theme for today. Read text and theme.

Religion, in the time of Jeremiah was at a low ebb. The people were borrowing their religion from others instead of getting it direct from God.

Contrast this with our text. The words of Jeremiah are in direct address to the Lord. His was a first-hand religion, a direct contact with God.

If I were to criticize American religious living, I would say, for one thing, that too much of it is second-hand religion.

Let me illustrate what I mean by second-ha hand religion.

Necessity compels people to frequent the second-hand shops and buy second-hand goods.

More than once I've bot a Watterman-pen in the hock shops for $.50 or $.75.

Used furniture and clothing.

Our communion table, bot at an auction.

The case of two newly-weds, seeking to fur- their home. He stood out for second-hand furniture, claiming he could get more for the little money they had. She stood out for new furniture, fewer pieces perhaps, but new, for she wanted her very own and not what others had used.

When it comes to religion, there are also two attitudes; some preferring to furnish their spiritual house with their very ow while others furnishing their spiritual house

with second-hand furniture, beliefs and ideas taken from others.

Creed-makers are all right in their place. They at least have thot things thru for themselves. The objection I have to creeds is that so many people accept them for their own without making them so by doing their own investigating and proving and thinking. If every man would make his own creed, we should realize more nearly nearly the ideal religious state.

Of course, I do not mean to say that a man should formulate his beliefs with no regard to the beliefs and experiences of others. If he does that, he will be utterly lost in vagaries and a million miles away from the religious experience of the race. Originality is not a matter of inventing entirely new ideas, but of translating the truth in one's own personality.

Jesus did'nt utter a single new truth- you can find his truths uttered in the O.T., and some of them in other religions. But he translated the truth as he saw it into the powerful influence of his own personality. He gave to the old truth a new dynamic.

The danger of second-hand religion must be apparent to all.

In Thibet, for a consideration, one may hire his prayers said for him. The prayer-wheel is turned and with each revolution one has credit for a prayer.

We laugh at this, but it is not so different from the practice of many Xns.

One makes a generous contribution to the church budget, but stays away from the services. He is helping to hire the preacher to do the praying for him and he should worry.

One can even go to church and share in the holy things of worship without worshipping. Paul gave warning against partaking of the bread and wine at the Lord's Supper unworthily, which is more easily done than otherwise.

No minister is certain that all present in his congregation are really worshipping. Many a person is physically present at church, but spiritually absent.

In real wirship, the Xn comes bringing something to the Lord. He comes with thanksgiming, bringing not merely an offering for the plate but an offering for the altar- a penitent heart. He comes preparéd to respond to the divine call to service. Isaiah went to the temple to worship in the true spiritual sense, and he received a spiritual call, to which he responded and became one of God's greatest prophets. Among church worshippers today you will find those who devise means of making greater profit in their business, and you will find those who seek a divine companionship.

Some folks think that going thru some kind of some kind of religious performance ~~will~~ will save them.

The minister who was called upon to bury a certain man. The man had been profane, for yrs he had never been to church, and he was mean beyond words to his own family. But the minister found the members of that family in a sort of exultation, for they told him, "Our father is saved, years ago he had the right baptism." I am sure that when a man is really saved his neighbors should be able to detect it, and his family should sense that something new has come into his life.

Not that Xn beliefs and ordinances have nothing to do with salvation, but they can never take the place of a fresh experience of the power of God in the life of the Xn.

Let me use another illustration. A man has high blood pressure and goes to the doctor. He cant climb the stairs without palpitating his heart to the unbearable point. After months of treatment and rest he can walk two miles and then some without tiring or affecting his heart. That man does not need a certif icate from his doctor to know that he is a well man again. The new sense of power running all thru his body tells him that, Nor does the sinner who has received a real salvation, instead of some second-